

At the bottom of this letter is a schedule of upcoming youth group events. But first, a story...

When my oldest son Tyler was born, he was born with a condition known as "pectus excavatum", more commonly known as a sunken breastbone. Basically, his sternum looked as if someone had taken their thumb and just pressed in on it. His heart was somewhat pushed to one side, and as he matured, his condition would create more and more problems. He would have diminished lung capacity, not to mention a huge indentation in his chest that would only appear deeper as his muscles grew. Clearly, he would need corrective surgery. By the time he was 7, X-rays showed that he had only 3/4 of an inch between his sternum and his spine.

Traditional surgery to fix such a problem was akin to open heart surgery. They would "crack open" Tyler's chest, reset the bones, and sew him back up, leaving a long - and permanent - scar down his chest.

As I began to research the situation, I discovered a team of doctors in Norfolk who had developed a new, minimally invasive procedure called the Nuss procedure, named for the pediatric surgeon who headed up the group. Two small slits between the ribs, slide in a curved metal bar, push the depressed sternum into place, secure the bar, and instant transformation to a perfect chest. In two years, after bones had hardened, it was an out-patient procedure to remove the bar.

Sign me up! Although Dr. Nuss had trained surgeons as close as Knoxville to do his procedure, I wanted to go straight to the healer who could help my son, and Norfolk is not all that far away. Didn't really matter...Norfolk or Tokyo, I would have made whatever trip I needed to. My son had a problem, and I knew who could fix it, and that's where I intended to go.

There was once a father whose son desperately needed help (Mark 9:14-29). From the time his son had been born, the boy had been afflicted with convulsions and seizures, and no one had been able to help him. I'm sure that father, just as I did with Tyler, searched everywhere for a cure, for someone to help his son. And then one day, it happened. Someone told him about Jesus. And the father knew what he had to do...he had to get his son to the Healer who could help his son.

...but when he showed up, the Healer was out of the office. He was out to lunch, but the "office staff" thought they could handle this case themselves. Except...they couldn't. Hard as they tried, Jesus' disciples could not heal this convulsing boy.

And then, the Healer showed up.

I love the exchange that took place between the father and the Healer...

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

"From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him.

But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, **"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"**

I love that conversation with Jesus because I can identify so well with it. So often, I come to Jesus and say something similar. "If you can help me..."

It was if Jesus responded to the man by saying, "IF I can do anything? IF I can? Who do you think you're talking to? OF COURSE I CAN! Just have faith."

And of course, the father said, "I DO believe...help my unbelief!"

Even though his faith might have been a little on the weak side, the father's trip to find Jesus paid off. The Healer cured his son, and the seizures finally stopped.

Can you identify with this story? As parents, don't we always want the very best for our children? We'd do anything for them! Help them with school work, take them to football practice, buy them the best band instrument, drive for hours to go to an out of town track meet or swim meet. Make sure they're in church. Take them to Norfolk to see a specialist. And the list could go on and on. I think one of the primary missions we have as parents is to do all we can to bring our children to Jesus.

As a parent, I want you - parents of youth group members - to know that my number one priority in everything we do in our youth ministry is making sure your children grow in their relationship with Jesus, the ultimate Healer and Helper. The programs, Bible studies, prayer breakfasts, youth group meetings, mission trips, times of fellowship, and everything else we do are designed to build relationships between your child and God. In the crazy-busy world we live in today, where we ALL are overwhelmed with too many appointments and meetings and deadlines and schedules, the things on our youth schedule will hopefully give you, the parent, many opportunities to bring your children to Jesus. After all, we can always find something to keep our children busy. What we need is something to help our children grow into followers of Christ. That's what I endeavor to do every single day.

I say all of that for one reason. It's important for me to make sure you know why I do what I do. Thank you for the trust you place in me and in our youth ministries. I pledge to work hard everyday to help your child build and maintain a relationship with their Savior. And thank you for your help and your encouragement! I am always blessed to come alongside you and help you in your ministry to your children.

SCHEDULE

This weekend there are two Mission Trip Fundraisers to raise money for our Johns Island and Nicaragua mission trips.

Saturday, April 8 - from 9 AM until 2 PM - we'll be washing cars at the Advance Auto store in front of Walmart / Sam's at Exit 7. Bring sponges, brushes, towels, etc.

Sunday, April 9 - from 9:30 AM until 11 AM - we're having a pancake breakfast in the Family Life Center. Here's what I need -

- Pancake batter
- Sausage (patties or links)
- Fruit - blueberries, strawberries, bananas
- Syrup (regular and sugar-free)
- Butter
- Orange juice
- Milk

Please contact me and let me know what you can bring! And of course, we need help in the kitchen starting about 8:30 Sunday morning.

We will have a Youth Group meeting Sunday night at church, from 5:45 to 7:30.

Tuesday, April 11 - at 7 AM - Prayer Breakfast for Abingdon / Patrick Henry / EB Stanley - at DUNK & DELI (moving back there from Bojangles)

Tuesday, April 11 - from 6 PM to 7:30 PM - Middle School Bible study, at church

Wednesday, April 12 - at 7 AM - Prayer Breakfast for Battle and Wallace - at Chick-fil-a

Wednesday, April 12 - from 7 PM to 8:30 PM - High School Bible study, at Clara's house

Easter Sunday, April 16 - no youth group activities

Coming up -

Sunday, April 23 - we're going hiking to The Channels, near Glade Spring.

Sunday, April 30 - Newsboys concert at Freedom Hall in Johnson City. 24 people are signed up for this concert and already have tickets. If you did not get a ticket but would like to go, there may be tickets available, I can check. Let me know if you're interested.

We're still registering people for Johns Island! It's not too late!! Please, please, please consider participating in this trip! If you're looking for a face-to-face with the Healer life changing trip, this is it!!

Again, thank you for all you do to help and support our youth ministries!!!

In Christ,
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